Horizon FAQ

Lynne Jeffries - 2024-10-17 - Horizon VDI

Q. What is Horizon?

Horizon is the nickname of VCU's new hybrid research computing Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) platform. This new research computing service is managed through the VCU School of Medicine (SOM) with a coalition of stakeholders from the SOM, VCU and VCU Health.

Horizon offers the following services:

- Virtual desktop preloaded with VCU standard research focused computational software

- High throughput, high performance computing for research support

- Image focused research utilizes Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) computing

- Highly secured compliant environment for clinical data sets

- Quick, robust, high availability data storage

Q. What is Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI)?

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) allows an end user to access their own desktop and software applications virtually which are hosted from the Horizon platform instead of using physical hardware such as a laptop or desktop.

Horizon end users will be able to access their own "virtual" Windows desktop with standard research applications.

VDI will allow researchers the flexibility to securely access Horizon remotely from any location.

Q. What are some of the key benefits of Horizon?

- Supports a wide variety of research computing for investigators across multiple disciplines.

- Provides a highly secured (zero trust security), compliant

environment supporting PHI data sources which will enhance collaboration & partnership with VCU Health

- Allows access from any VCU/VCUHS managed Windows or Mac computer
- Facilitates secure collaboration with external partners

Q. What types of research does Horizon support?

This new infrastructure will provide an environment to support a wide variety of research computing for investigators across multiple disciplines, including (but not limited to): bioinformatics, data sciences, population health, public health, cancer research, research labs, and many others.

Q. Who can use Horizon?

- Open to all users and all categories of secure research and supports all levels of VCU Data Classifications.
- Investigators will be guided to use Horizon by default for research with identifiable patient information using VCU Health System (VCUHS) datasets effective Oct. 16, 2024.

Q. Can external collaborators working with VCU researchers use Horizon?

Yes, external collaborators can use Horizon with the following requirements:

- Must be affiliate status
- Access using Zscaler or Cisco Anyconnect depending on which environment (i.e. black or gold environments)

Q. How do you request access to Horizon?

You can submit a ticket in Rams Central by selecting the VCU School of Medicine and select Horizon. [Request Horizon support or a consultation with our team](#).

Q. How can you connect to Horizon?

End-users of Horizon can connect to the Horizon VDI environment from *any* location with an internet connection.

Horizon can be accessed via your web browser or from the Horizon desktop application. Instructions on connecting to Horizon are available at [SOMHelp](#).

Q. What is the cost for using Horizon?

Costs have been allocated to the system based primarily in two categories – virtual machines (VM's) and storage. Charges per VM are flat based on the capabilities of the machine, while storage charges are usage-based above a given allocation. For more details including billing rates, please refer to the [Horizon Cost Structure](#).

Hosting costs are subsidized by the VCU Technology Operations Center (TOC).

Q. Horizon technology infrastructure quick facts:

- 320 CPU cores
- 5.5 TB memory
- 5 x NVIDIA 48GB A40 GPU processors
- 2.6 PB usable storage
- VMWare virtualization platform
- Redundant infrastructure to support failover operations